

Pain Relief

Excerpted and adapted from a *shiur* by Dayan Yitzhak Grossman

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https://baishavaad.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/BER79_003_Lech_Lecha_Painless_Procedure_Anesthesia-During-Circumcision.mp3

On that very day was Avraham circumcised with Yishmael his son.

Bereishis 17:26

There is a dispute in the Midrash whether Avraham experienced a normal bris milah with pain or a miraculous one with no action on his part and no pain. Most *mefarshim*, like the Imrei Yosher, accept the first view as normative, and many of them maintain that a bris milah must entail some pain, so anesthesia must be avoided.

Some *poskim* offer other arguments against anesthesia. First, some require that the mohel be made a *shaliach* (proxy), and an adult undergoing a bris under general anesthesia will be unable to appoint a proxy. Second, they note that the minhag Yisrael was never to use anesthesia at a bris. Third, the Sheivet Halevi argues that the small element of danger from the anesthesia should be avoided.

Other *poskim*, including the Maharsham and R' Ovadia Yosef, permit anesthesia at a bris. They note that no classic sources explicitly state that pain is a requirement for bris milah, and the *shlichus* is entirely valid because the mohel has the proper *kavanah* to fulfill the mitzvah. Finally, they reject the consideration of danger, because anesthesia is used regularly today in surgery.

A third group of *poskim*, including the Ma'archei Lev and Rav Elyashiv (cited in Nishmas Avraham), holds that one should be *machmir* to avoid anesthesia during a bris in normal situations, but for adults or for children in unique circumstances where the bris may be especially painful, one may be lenient.